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FACULTY PROFILE

GEORGE SERRA

Dr. George Serra of the Political Science Department is firmly committed to helping Bridgewater implement its mission statement as a regional public college. In his professional responsibilities and his outreach to the region, Professor Serra is working to enhance the political and economic climate in southeastern Massachusetts. In the process he has linked the technology available in the Moakley Center with his work and along the way has become a local television talk show host.

Prior to arriving at Bridgewater State College in 1996, Professor Serra was on the faculty at the University of Miami where he built a national reputation for his work on the U.S. Congress. Professor Serra is one of the most frequently cited and authoritative experts in the United States on the impact of casework in the U.S. House of Representatives. This is not an arcane or narrow research focus, since the importance of casework in understanding congressional elections and policy-making has been widely acknowledged by students of Congress.

Professor Serra has built on his research on the Congress with his vision that it is essential to link scholarship with practical application. Once at Bridgewater he set out to develop the Center for Legislative Studies. This ambitious project, which was formally launched in 1997, is designed to be a resource for students, national and state legislators and local governmental officials. Specifically, the Center connects state and federal legislators to the college as well as assisting the Institute for Regional Development in achieving its economic development goals through the Southeastern Massachusetts Legislative Caucus. But besides providing assistance to the legislative community in this region, Professor Serra moved the Center quickly into a dynamic educational resource with the establishment of a distinguished legislator speakers series and a well-respected television show, *Commonwealth Politics*.

The distinguished legislator speaker series and *Commonwealth Politics* are programs that are taped in the John Joseph Moakley Center for Technological Applications

and later aired on local cable television access in 32 cities and towns in Massachusetts. The goal of the speaker series is to provide students and the community with a civic education program that informs them of the legislative process and legislative policy-making. Speakers who have participated in the series include Massachusetts Speaker of the House Thomas Finneran, Senator Robert Antonioni, and Senator Marc Pacheco. *Commonwealth Politics* is a round table discussion on the political process and policy issues with state and federal legislators. Professor Serra moderates this program with Dr. Victor DeSantis, who is the Coordinator of the Institute for Regional Development. He is also assisted by Dr. Jabbar Al-Obaidi of the Communication Studies and Theatre Arts Department, who provides production assistance and student interns as camera operators, control room technicians and floor directors. The show has brought numerous high profile legislators to campus and has focused on issues such as K-12 education, criminal justice, business investment and taxation, elections, welfare reform, health care, and urban redevelopment. Recent programs have highlighted Congressman James McGovern and state legislators such as Senators Theresa Murray, Mark Montigny and Henri Rauschenbach and Representatives Francis Marini of Hanson, Phillip Travis of Rehobeth and John Lepper of Attleboro. In a short period of time, *Commonwealth Politics* has become an important media vehicle for faculty collaboration, student instruction and regional issue education.

Throughout the development and implementation of the Center's programs, Professor Serra has emphasized the importance of working with a wide range of constituencies and providing forums that are objective and bipartisan. His work with the Southeastern Massachusetts Legislative Caucus on economic development issues is a high priority and melds nicely with the mission of the College in improving the quality of life in this region. Also Professor Serra has assumed the responsibility of coordinating state legislative internships on Bridgewater's campus and the Washington Center Program, a new initiative of the College, which provides opportunities for students to gain college credit and valuable work experience in our nation's capital.

Professor Serra is a dedicated student of legislative politics and well-respected instructor. While at Bridgewater he has published several articles, delivered conference presentations, and developed two grant proposals for research on the Congress that have received support from the Center for the Advancement of Research and Teaching. Most importantly, his classes on the Congress, the Presidency and Racial Politics are enormously popular with both political science majors and the general student population. It is no exaggeration to state that Professor Serra's passion for the study of legislative politics and his innovative approaches to strengthening this region provide an invaluable resource for students, legislators and most importantly, the citizens of Massachusetts.

*Commonwealth
Politics*